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CLAUDIO ESKENAZI

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FOCUS ON NICARAGUA

ANNCR:

VOA'S CLAUDIO ESKENAZI HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT ON THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN NICARAGUA IN THE WAKE OF GROWING OPPOSITION TO THE SOMOZO GOVERNMENT, EXEMPLIFIED BY A GENERAL STRIKE IN THAT CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRY.

NARR:

THE TENSE POLITICAL SITUATION IN NICARAGUA TOOK ON INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE THIS WEEK AFTER VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ STRONGLY CRITICIZED ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THAT CENTRAL AMERICAN NATION. THE VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT ALSO URGED THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES TO LOOK INTO THE NICARAGUAN SITUATION.

A FEW DAYS LATER THE O.A.S.' PERMANENT COUNCIL MET IN WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF A FOREIGNMINISTERS' MEETING TO ASSESS THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN NICARAGUA. VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR JOSE MARIA MACHIN TOLD THE O.A.S. THAT THE SITUATION IN MANAGUA COULD SERIOUSLY AFFECT THE PFACE AND SECURITY OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE. AMBASSADOR MACHIN ALSO STRESSED VENEZUELA'S CONCERN FOR INDIVIDUAL LIBERTIES IN NICARAGUA -- CALLING THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION THERE ONE OF "ANGUISH AND PAIN".

BUT NICARAGUA'S AMBASSADOR GUILLERMO SEVILLA-SACASA -- ECHOING PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S PREVIOUS STATEMENTS -- CONDEMNED VENEZUELA'S REQUEST FOR AN O.A.S. FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING AS AN INTERVENTION IN NICARAGUA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. HE BLAMED WHAT HE CALLED INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM FOR THE CURRENT SITUATION IN NICARAGUA AND CHARGED VENEZUELA WITH ATTEMPTING TO PROMOTE

INSURRECTION THERE. AMBASSADOR SEVILLA-SACASA SAID VENEZUELA SHOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO POSE AS THE HEMISPHERIC CHAMPION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, ADDING THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ARE ALSO VIOLATED IN VENEZUELA. IN THE END OF THE OFTEN-BITTER DEBATE, THE O.A.S. COUNCIL POSTPONED UNTIL NEXT TUESDAY A VOTE ON THE VENEZUELAN REQUEST FOR A FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING.

THE UNITED STATES ALSO SUPPORTED VENEZUELA'S MOVE TO BRING THE NICARAGUAN SITUATION TO THE ATTENTION OF THE O.A.S. AS A FIRST STEP IN GENERATING SOME FORM OF INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION.

INTERNATIONAL CONCERN OVER THE SITUATION IN NICARAGUA WAS ALSO EXPRESSED ON ANOTHER FRONT. COSTA RICA'S FOREIGN MINISTER VISITED THE NEIGHBORING CENTRAL AMERICAN NATIONS OF HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR IN AN EFFORT TO SEEK A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN MANAGUA. NO DETAILS OF THIS LATEST INITIATIVE HAVE YET BEEN ANNOUNCED. BUT A U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THE UNITED STATES HAD BEEN INFORMED OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN EFFORT IN ADVANCE. THE SPOKESMAN ADDED THAT THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTS THE INITIATIVE BECAUSE WASHINGTON IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION IN NICARAGUA AND ITS POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON THE REGION'S SECURITY. THE SPOKESMAN ALSO SAID THE UNITED STATES BELIEVES BOTH THE SOMOZA GOVERNMENT AND ITS OPPONENTS SHOULD SIT DOWN AND TALK TO EACH OTHER.

MEANWHILE, REPORTS FROM MANAGUA SAY THE GENERAL STRIKE -- ABOUT TO ENTER ITS THIRD WEEK -- IS BEING SUPPORTED BY NINETY-FIVE PERCENT OF THE LARGE STORES IN THE NICARAGUAN CAPITAL AND THAT SEVENTY PERCENT OF THE FACTORIES WERE ALSO SHUT DOWN. SOME OBSERVERS THINK THAT THE ANTI-SOMOZA SANDINISTA GUERRILLAS ARE WAITING FOR THE STRIKE TO FALTER BEFORE LAUNCHING FURTHER ASSAULTS ON THE SOMOZA GOVERNMENT.